

CSA News

The Creation Science Association for Mid-America

"It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man" Psalm 118:8

Volume 22 (6) Nov - Dec, 2005

The Bible: Literal, Symbolic or Pro Choice?

by Tom Willis

A couple months ago I received an irate letter from a woman who had read something I had written that contained "christian evolutionists" and "it is hard to accomplish much evolution in six days" (see Genesis 1, Exodus 20:9-11, 31:17). Amidst an angry salvo, she *proved* I was wrong by announcing that there was symbolic language (parables) in the Bible.

More recently I received a series of condescending e-mails from a *highly educated* theologian from a well-known university. He made it a point to list every worldly medal purchased by him, except his cub scout wampum-making merit badge. I have a virtually identical list of trinkets, but seldom mention them, feeling, like Paul the apostle, that they have value equivalent to "filthy rags." Remember, college degrees, etc., are things you purchased, or a socialist state purchased for you.

I am currently engaged in dialog with two PhD Romanists who base their entire view of Scripture on what their denomination tells them it means, selectively *symbolic*.

What struck me, aside from the anger in the two, and condescension in all three, was the reminder that an incredibly high percentage of these assaults are *intellectually under-girded* by pointing to one symbolic passage in Scripture, and saying something like, "See the Bible contains symbolic stuff." The lady did **just that**. The theologian was a tad more refined. I had cited "*Six days you shall labor and do all your work* (Exodus 20:9)... "*For in six days Jehovah made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day*" (Ex 20:11); and (Ex 31:15-17) which says the same in a little different words, closing with "*and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed.*"

The "theologian" merely laughed, informed me I obviously knew nothing of theology and condescendingly cited the last part of verse 31:17 (above). He didn't even waste a sentence explaining why this was a dramatic refutation of my uneducated position. He merely declared the discussion over and anointed himself victor. Unless you are reading carefully you may think he was crazy. His point was a *scholarly indirect proof*. God does not get tired, so He could not get 'rested and refreshed,' therefore, Exodus 31 contains symbolic stuff, proving I am an oaf to suggest the *six days* mean *six days*. Incidentally, the Hebrew, as any child with a concordance can learn, does not require that God "rested," but that He "ceased" from work. As to whether God can be refreshed, there are at least four translations of the word. I choose to believe God, not a "theologian" with decibels. More below.

So many people are deceived by *Biblical exegesis* of this sort, it is appropriate we, at least briefly, give it some serious treatment. Pretend you are reading a book containing the following narrative:

Penny and Tom returned home. Penny told the kids, "Tom was a beast at the restaurant." The very next day, a very large beast (later determined to be a bear) broke down the kitchen door and killed their two dogs.

See next column.



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Now, our task is to be great, educated interpreters of this book. Should we say "This book contains some symbolic speech, "beast," therefore only specially educated people can read it. From them we learn that "Penny" is a symbol for all contentious women. "Tom" is a symbol for all grumpy men, the restaurant is a symbol for the places women hang out who are too lazy to cook, etc. Is it really illiterate ignorance to suggest that Penny used a metaphor to describe Tom's behavior, the beast was a real bear, and the book is largely a factual account of Penny and Tom's life, with occasional figures of speech?

How do we know? Well, the book is clearly largely a factual narrative, with some figures of speech. It is not sprinkled with uncaused miracles or magic, has no mention of men and animals transforming, and, in such a world, real men rarely grow long hair and incisor teeth and start growling and running around on all fours at a restaurant. We also know the first beast (Tom) was a metaphor because most

See next page

of us have learned to read, and did not do so at the feet of someone trained at a cemetery... eeerrrr, seminary, steeped in unbelief.

A casual reading of many English books easily turns up uses of the English *day* where it is not a "literal day," ("In King George's *day* the ladies wore long skirts") and others where it clearly means a literal day ("On the fourth *day* of King George's reign, he rose early and had eggs for breakfast"). The Bible, except in apocalyptic passages, contains fewer figures of speech than many modern authors, but certainly does contain some. The context gives you the clues you need. Yet, in English novels and history books, unless they are poorly written, there is no debate over what *day* means.

A search of a Bible (I used KJV) yields 2295 occurrences of the Hebrew word for *day* (*yome*) in 1927 verses (due to multiple occurrences in some verses). This type of count should be accompanied by a warning. Strong, though he did extraordinary scholarship, was human, and lacked computers. He did not distinguish, for example, between the word for "day," and the plural "days." But, it is possible to find "non-literal" uses of the word *yome*.

However, of all the 2200+ occurrences of *yome* in the *Bible* there is virtually no debate about its meaning except six occurrences in Genesis 1. Interestingly, with each of these critical *days* (*yome*), there is also a number and "evening and morning." Elsewhere, when *yome* occurs with a number, evening, or morning, it always means "a day." In short, the Holy Spirit could not have made it more plain what he meant by the days of Creation.

Further confirmed by the absolutely clear Exodus 20 & 31 (see above) we can be certain that the six critical *yome* in Genesis 1 are clearly intended by the author to mean *6 days*. Since the rotational velocity of the earth was greater then, the days were actually somewhat shorter than our present days, not longer, as the pop view claims!

Another thought, there is a very good reason the lady and theologian did not elaborate. Their apologetic *logic* boils down to, "I have found a metaphor in Scripture, therefore, I am free to interpret the passage, or any other passage, any way I see fit." Neither even pretended to tell us how far they think a single metaphor "symbolicizes," a sentence, a paragraph, a chapter, a book, or the entire Bible? They just rejected the obvious meaning, and spread a layer of metaphorical smoke. The only thing the *theologian* added to the lady's smoke was an un-stated *proof* that, "Because I say God can't rest or be refreshed, my degrees, college medals and wampum merit badge give me the authority to interpret every origins passage any way I see fit."

Please note, I mean, in no way, to belittle the individuals involved here. In prior articles (see end of this article) we illustrated that this sort of *logic* permeates so-called *educated Bible interpretation*. It seems to be the norm, not the exception. The two Romanists have a "wonderful" solution, "It's all soooooo complicated, only the Pope (or one of his councils) can tell us what the Bible really means." My view is that this is Gnostic/New Age/Spirit Guide rubbish. God never established a Church under Peter or a Pope. He established a Church under Peter's profound statement, "Thou [Jesus] art the Christ, the son of the living God." Matt 16:16. Jesus made clear that Peter did not even figure that much out, it was revealed to him. Furthermore, *Pope* Peter received serious rebuke from Jesus and Paul after this event.

Jesus prayed "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" John 17:17. Jesus somehow failed to pray, "Sanctify them through Peter and his replacements." We are commanded "Study

to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" 2Tim 2:15. Again, he failed to say we need a great human leader or seminary graduate to lead us into truth. And, "... when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come" John 16:13. Thus, the Bible teaches that we each have our own TRUE "spirit guide." Only in one place was a "council" used to resolve a conflict between Paul and some Jews pushing the Law. Peter did not make the final proclamation, and it is clear that "they," not Peter, wrote the letters to send to the churches.

My goal is not to show that my challengers are Dodo heads; but that irate decibel level, even when (or especially when) accompanied by store-bought "certificates of merit," offers no guarantee of quality, and that most of the Bible does not require *expert assistance*. You are responsible before God, not before Popes or university-annointed *experts*, neither of which can raise your moldy body.

Never fall for the deception that forces choice between a "literal" and a "symbolic" interpretation. Metaphors are fully a part of serious narrative, though some authors use them sparingly. In Biblical apocalyptic text (they are deliberately obscure), in parables (teaching tools), they are explained). Elsewhere, sentences with obvious metaphors are virtually always to be taken as part of serious history or fact. In the fictional book above, suppose Penny said, "It rained cats and dogs last night." Would it mean, "Penny is really a monkey" and "last night is really 14 billion years ago?" When Moses said "the floodgates of Heaven were opened" [as the 2nd event initiating the great flood], this may well be a metaphor, but it does not mean that the flood is not real and Noah is really a symbol for all godly men who have near-drowning experiences. Where God did use metaphors, He frequently accompanied them with warnings, "The ten horns are ten kings" Dan 7:24, "He spake in parables" (various verses, five times).

Obviously this essay could have become a treatise before exhausting all the "this passage contains symbolism" issues which are raised largely by people who prefer to believe themselves (or "science") rather than God. All I claim to have accomplished herein is to give some evidence and reason showing that:

1. The existence of metaphor in a book, does not mean the entire thing can be interpreted any way you see fit.

2. The purported *apologetic evidence* for rejecting a six day creation is largely hokum. The typical arguments are without a shred of substance, especially when the clarity of Genesis 1, Exodus 20 and 31 are honestly and competently examined. Certainly, other arguments do surface, but the chief "controversial" ones are represented herein. If there are truly substantive ones I left out, contact me.

3. Get real with God's word, and He will make it real for you!

Related articles can be found at www.csama.org, "Newsletters," in Jan - Feb, 2005 CSA News "Christmas in America - How Should We Then Live?" Nov, 1999 issue, "I'm a Christian Too Proof of Evolution." The thrust was a bit different, but the content relevant.

PS: The metaphorical "Penny" in the "book" is my literal wife, and is only occasionally more contentious than I am grumpy.

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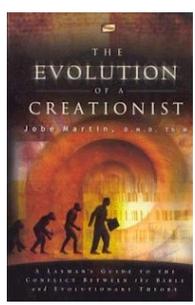
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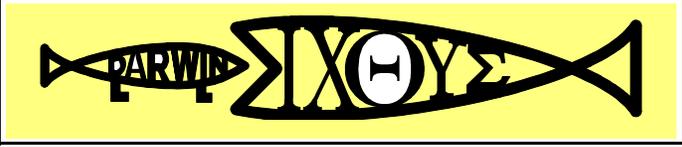
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**The Creation Science Association
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Fellowship & Book Table: 6:15PM - Meeting: 7:00PM Nursery Available: \$2.50 per child (Reservations required for nursery)

CSA Meeting - Tuesday, Nov 1, 2005

A "Fresh" Ancient Approach to Genesis 1 & 2

By: Curt Wagner, Ph.D. Theoretical Physics

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By: R.A.T.E. Team

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